

CHAPTER 2

In this chapter we have,

I. A further description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars (v. 1-11).

II. A serious call to the people, when they are under this sore judgment, to return and repent, to fast and pray, and to seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this aright (v. 12-17).

III. A promise that, upon their repentance, God would remove the judgment, would repair the breaches made upon them by it, and restore unto them plenty of all good things (v. 18-27).

IV. A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days (v. 28-32). Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his favour, and it is in the way of repentance that this blessed change is made; so that, though it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel-times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure, representing the curses of the law invading men for their sins, and the comforts of the gospel flowing in to them upon their repentance.

~~211~~ JOEL 2:1-11

THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins and executing upon them the judgment written in the law (~~458D~~ Deuteronomy 28:42), *The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume*, which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them, v. 60.

I. Here is the war proclaimed (v. 1): *Blow the trumpet in Zion*, either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or

rather to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might *prepare to meet their God* in the way of his judgments and might endeavor by prayers and tears, the church's best artillery, to put by the stroke. It was the priests' business to sound the trumpet (^{<4018>}Numbers 10:8), both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face. Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God of the fatal consequences of sin, and to reveal his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And though it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them, that they might make their peace with him. Even in *the holy mountain* the alarm must be *sounded*, and then it sounds most dreadful, ^{<3012>}Amos 3:2. Now, *shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in the holy city, and the people not be afraid?* Surely they will. ^{<3016>}Amos 3:6. *Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble;* they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

II. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which *cometh*, which is *nigh at hand*, and there is no avoiding it. It is the *day of the Lord*, the day of his judgment, in which he will both manifest and magnify himself. It is *a day of darkness and gloominess* (v. 2), literally so, the swarms of locusts and caterpillars being so large and so thick as to darken the sky (^{<0115>}Exodus 10:15), or rather figuratively; it will be a melancholy time, a time of grievous affliction. And it will come *as the morning spread upon the mountains*; the darkness of this day will come as suddenly as the morning light, as irresistibly, will spread as far, and grow upon them as the morning light.

III. Here is the army drawn up in array (v. 2): They are a *great people, and a strong*. Any one sees the vast numbers that there shall be of locusts and caterpillars, destroying the land, will say (as we are all apt to be most affected with what is present), “Surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again.” Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience. When God had drowned the world once he promised never to do it again. The army is here describe to be,

1. Very bold and daring: *They are as horses*, as war-horses, that rush into the battle and *are not affrighted* (^{<3022>}Job 39:22); and *as horsemen*, carried

on with martial fire and fury, *so they shall run*, v. 4. Some of the ancients have observed that the head of a locust is very like, in shape, to the head of a horse.

2. Very loud and noisy — *like the noise of chariots*, of many chariots, when driven furiously over rough ground, *on the tops of the mountains*, v. 5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St. John saw rise out of the bottomless pit. ^{<667>}Revelation 9:7, 9, *The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to the battle; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle.* Historians tell us that the noise made by swarms of locusts in those countries that are infested with them has sometimes been heard six miles off. The noise is likewise compared to that of a *roaring fire*; it is like the *noise of a flame that devours the stubble*, which noise is the more terrible because that which it is the indication of is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad they make a great noise; and it is necessary for the awakening of a secure and stupid world that they should do so.

(3.) They are very regular, and keep ranks in their march; though numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are *as a strong people set in battle array* (v. 5.): *They shall march every one on his ways*, straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post and observe their right-hand man. *They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another*, v. 7, 8. Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God should observe order, and keep ranks, should diligently go on in their own work and stand in one another's way.

4. They are very *swift*; they *run like horsemen* (v. 4), *run like mighty men* (v. 7); they *run to and fro in the city*, and *run upon the wall*, v. 9. When God *sends forth his command on earth* his word *runs very swiftly*, ^{<475>}Psalms 147:15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them.

IV. Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army,

1. In the country, v. 3. View the army in the front, and you will see a *fire devouring before them*; they consume all as if they breathed fire. View it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the

foremost: *Behind them a flame burns*. When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are *as the garden of Eden*, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits; they are the pride and glory of the country. But look upon the fields that they have eaten up and they are *as a desolate wilderness*; one would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before, or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and *nothing shall escape them* than can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of their grounds any more than of their bodies, for God can soon change the face of both.

2. In the city. They shall *climb the wall* (v. 7), they shall *run upon the houses*, and *enter in at the windows like a thief* (v. 9); when Egypt was plagued with *locusts*, they filled *Pharaoh's houses* and the *houses of his servants*, ⁽²⁰¹⁵⁾Exodus 10:5, 6. The locusts out of the bottomless pit, Satan's emissaries, and missionaries of the man of sin, do as these locusts. God's judgments too, when they come with commission, cannot be kept out with bars and bolts; they will find or force their way.

V. The impressions that should hereby be made upon the people. They shall find it to no purpose to make opposition. These enemies are invulnerable and therefore irresistible: *When they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded*, v. 8. And those that cannot be hurt cannot be stopped; and therefore *before their faces the people shall be much pained* (v. 6), as the merchants are in pain for their trading ships when they hear they are just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. "One is in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, *and all faces gather blackness*," which denotes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale, but men in despair look black; the whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns into blackness. What is the matter of our pride and pleasure God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in is described (v. 10) by figurative expressions: *The earth shall quake and the heavens tremble*; even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, shall be seized with astonishment. Or when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalency of their fear, or for want of the supports of life which they used to have, their eye shall wax dim and their sight fail them, so that to them *the sun and moon shall seem to be dark*, and the stars to *withdraw*

their shining. Note, When God frowns upon men the lights of heaven will be small joy to them; for man, by rebelling against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures. But, though this is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the *heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.* Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgment.

VI. We are here directed to look up both him who is the commander-in-chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, v. 11. It is *his army*; it is *his camp*. He raised it; he gives it commission; he *utters his voice before it*, as the general gives orders to his army what to do and makes a speech to animate the soldiers; it is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think that with this cloud of locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, *The voice of the Lord*, and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and the earth tremble. It is the *day of the Lord* (as it was called, v. 1), for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must needs be his, for *his camp is great* and numerous. Those whom he makes war upon he can, as here, overpower with numbers; and whoever he employs to *execute his word*, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made *strong* and *par negotio* — *equal to what he undertakes*; whom God gives commission to he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the *great day* of the Lord *very terrible* to all those who in that day are to be made the monuments of his justice; for *who can abide it?* None can escape the arrests of God's wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, ^{AND} 1 Samuel 6:20; ^{AND} Psalm 76:7.

^{AND} JOEL 2:12-17

EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the foregoing verses: *Therefore now turn you to the Lord.*

1. “Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end, to convince you of your sins, to humble you for

them, to reduce you to your right minds and to your allegiance.” God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to repentance and so bring us to himself.

2. “Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better.” Here is a gracious invitation,

1. To a personal repentance, exercised in the soul, *every family apart, and their wives apart*, ^{<302>}Zechariah 12:12. When the judgments of God are abroad, each person is concerned to contribute his *quota* to the common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one and mourn for one, and then we should all be mended and all found among God's mourners. Observe,

1. What we are here called to, which will teach us what it is to repent, for it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance.

(1.) We must be truly humbled for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments and wronged our interests. There must be outward expressions of sorrow and shame, *fasting*, and *weeping*, and *mourning*; tears for the sin that procured it. But what will the outward expressions of sorrow avail if the inward impressions be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And therefore it follows, *Rend your heart, and not your garments*; not but that, according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to rend their garments, in token of great grief for their sins and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly; but, “Rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits than to accommodate your dress to a day of fasting and humiliation; nay, rend not your garments at all, unless withal you rend your hearts, for the sign without the thing signified is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God.” Rending the heart is that which God looks for and requires; that is the *broken and contrite heart* which he *will not despise*, ^{<317>}Psalms 51:17. When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even *cuts us to the heart* to think how we have dishonoured God and disparaged ourselves by it, when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavor to get clear of the principles of it and never

to return to the practice of it, then we rend our hearts for it, and then will God *rend the heavens* and come down to us with mercy.

(2.) We must be thoroughly converted to our God, and come home to him when we fall out with sin. *Turn you even to me, said the Lord* (v. 12), and again (v. 13), *Turn unto the Lord your God*. Our fasting and weeping are worth nothing if we do not with them turn to God as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned the back upon him, and thereupon, by a firm and fixed resolution, make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we *return to the Lord our God*, and this we are all commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

2. What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him *with all their hearts*. When the heart is rent for sin, and rent from it, then it is prepared to turn entirely to God, and to be devoted entirely to him, and he will have it all or none. Now, to bring ourselves to this, let us consider,

(1.) We are sure that he is, in general, a good God. We must *turn to the Lord our God*, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should drive us to him, but because he is *gracious and merciful*, in receiving upon us our repentance, the hope of which should draw us to him. He is gracious and merciful, delights not in the death of sinners, but desires that they may turn and live. *He is slow to anger* against those that offend him, but of *great kindness* towards those that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamation of his name when he caused *his goodness*, and with it all his glory, to *pass before Moses*, ^{<1316>}Exodus 34:6, 7. *He repents him of the evil*, not that he changes his mind, but, when the sinner's mind is changed, God's way towards him is changed; the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off. Note, That is genuine, ingenuous, and evangelical repentance, which arises from a firm belief of the mercy of God, which we have sinned against, and yet are not in despair. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of emboldening us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, ^{<1314>}Psalm 130:4. The act of indemnity brings those to God whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

(2.) We have reason to hope that he will, upon our repentance, give us that good which by sin we have forfeited and deprived ourselves of (v. 14),

that he will *return and repent*, that he will not proceed against us as he has done, but will act in favour of us. *Therefore* let us repent of our sins against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope that he will repent of his judgments against us and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe,

[1.] The manner of expectation is very humble and modest: *Who knows if he will?* Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as ^{<1219>}Joshua 24:19. Or, rather, it is expressed doubtfully because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, of which we cannot be so confident as we can that, in general, God is gracious and merciful. There is no question at all to be made but that if we truly repent of our sins God will forgive them, and be reconciled to us; but whether he will remove this or the other affliction which we are under may well be questioned, and yet the probability of it should encourage us to repent. Promises of temporal good things are often made with a peradventure. *It may be, you shall be hid,* ^{<318B>}Zephaniah 2:3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die, and, when David prayed for its life, he said, as here, *Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me* in this matter likewise? ^{<1022>}2 Samuel 12:22. The Ninevites repented and reformed upon such a consideration as this, ^{<318B>}Jonah 3:9.

[2.] The matter of expectation is very pious. They hope God will return and repent, and *leave a blessing behind him*, not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but *behind him*, that is, “After he has ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing upon us;” and what is it? It is a *meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God*. The fruits of the earth are called *a blessing* (^{<218B>}Isaiah 45:8) because they depend upon God's blessing and are necessary blessings to us. They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so was that God's altar was deprived of its offerings and God's priests of their maintenance; that therefore which they comfort themselves with the prospect of in their return of plenty is that then there shall be meat-offerings and drink-offerings in abundance brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wonted abundance of meat and drink brought to their own tables. Thus when Hezekiah was in hopes that he should recover of his sickness he asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up*, not to the thrones of

judgment, or to the councilboard, but *to the house of the Lord?* ^{<382>}Isaiah 38:22. Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of meat-offering and the drink-offering, that will bring along with it other blessings, will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

II. They are here called to a public national repentance, to be exercised in the solemn assembly, as a national act, for the glory of God and the excitement of one another, and that the neighbouring nations might know and observe what it was that qualified them for God's gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, v. 15, 16. The trumpet was blown (v. 1), to sound an *alarm of war*; but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace. God is willing to show mercy to his people if he do but find them in a frame fit for it; and therefore, Call them together; *sanctify a fast*. By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast, the *day of atonement*, a day to *afflict the soul*; and, if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more; but now that they had by sin brought the judgments of God upon them they are often called to fasting. What was said ^{<314>}Joel 1:14 is here repeated: "*Call a solemn assembly; gather the people* (press them to come together upon this errand); *sanctify the congregation*; appoint a time for solemn preparation beforehand and put them in mind to prepare themselves. Let not the greatest be excused, but *assemble the elders*, the judges and magistrates. Let not the meanest be passed by, but *gather the children, and those that suck the breasts*." It is good to bring little children, as soon as they are capable of understanding any thing, to religious assemblies, that they may be trained up betimes in the way wherein they should go; but these were brought even when they were at the breast and were kept fasting, that by their cries for the breast the hearts of the parents might be moved to repent of sin, which God might justly so visit upon their children that the *tongue of the sucking child might cleave to the roof of his mouth* (^{<204>}Lamentations 4:4), and that on them God might have compassion, as he had on the infants of Nineveh, ^{<341>}Jonah 4:11. New-married people must not be exempted: *Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber and the bride out of her closet*; let them not take state upon them as usual, not put

on their ornaments, nor indulge themselves in mirth, but address themselves to the duties of the public fast with as much gravity and sadness as any of their neighbours. Note, Private joys must always give way to public sorrows, both those for affliction and those for sin.

2. How the work of the day must be carried on, v. 17.

(1.) The priests, *the Lord's ministers*, must preside in the congregation, and be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God; who should stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God but those whose business it was to make intercession upon ordinary occasions?

(2.) They must officiate *between the porch and the altar*. There they used to attend about the sacrifices, and therefore now that they have no sacrifices to offer, or next to none, there they must offer up spiritual sacrifices. There the people must see them weeping and wrestling, like their father Jacob, and be helped into the same devout frame. Ministers must themselves be affected with those things wherewith they desire to affect others. It was *between the porch and the altar* that Zechariah the son of Jehoiada was put to death for his faithfulness; that precious blood God would require at their hands, and therefore, to turn away the judgment threatened for it, there they must *weep*.

(3.) They must pray. Words here are put into their mouths, which they might in their prayers enlarge upon. Their petition must be, *Spare thy people, O Lord!* God's people, when they are in distress, can expect no relief against God's justice but what comes from his mercy. They cannot say, Lord, *right us*, but, Lord, *spare us*. We deserve the correction; we need it; but, Lord, mitigate it. The sinner's supplication is, *Spare us, good Lord*. Their plea must be taken from the relation wherein they stand to God ("They are *thy people*, and *thy heritage*, therefore have compassion on them"), but especially from the concern of God's glory in their trouble — "Lord, *give not thy heritage to reproach*, to the reproach of famine; let not the land of Canaan, that has so long been celebrated as the glory of all lands, now be made the scorn of all lands; let not *the heathen rule over them*, as they will easily do when thy heritage is thus impoverished and disabled to subsist. Let not the heathen make them *a proverb*, or a *by-word*" (so some read it); "let it never be said, *As poor and beggarly as an Israelite*." Note, The maintaining of the credit of the nation among its neighbours is a blessing to be desired and prayed for by all that wish well to it. But that reproach of the church is especially to be dreaded and

depreciated which reflects upon God: “Let them not *say among the people, Where is their God* — that God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of and put such a confidence in?” If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, “God was either weak and could not relieve them or unkind and would not.” ~~CHB~~ Deuteronomy 32:37, *Where are now their gods in whom they trusted?* And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them. *Where are they gods of Hamath and Arpad?* But it must by no means be suffered that they should say of Israel, *Where is their God?* For we are sure that our God is in the heavens (~~CHB~~ Psalm 115:2, 3), is in his temple, ~~CHB~~ Psalm 11:4.

~~CHB~~ JOEL 2:18-27

PROMISES OF MERCY

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he *waits to be gracious*; as soon as ever they humble themselves under this hand, and pray, and seek his face, he immediately meets them with his favours. They prayed that God would *spare them*, and see here with what *good words and comfortable words* he answered them; for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

I. Whence this mercy promised shall take rise (v. 18): God will be *jealous for his land* and *pity his people*. He will have an eye,

1. To his own honour, and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised nor disparaged, but will be jealous for the credit of his land, and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people.

2. To their distress: He will *pity his people*, and, in pity to them, he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners.

II. What his mercy shall be, in several instances: —

1. The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated (v. 20): “*I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north, brought in upon the wings of a north wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of; but, when you have made your peace with God, he will ease you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where, after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance. Those that have their face to the east sea (the Dead Sea, which lay east of Judea) shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the Great Sea,*” called here the *utmost sea*. They had made the land barren and desolate, and now God will cast them into a land barren and desolate. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with; and the rod is thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects but the ill savour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts they were carried away to the Red Sea, ⁽¹⁰⁹⁾Exodus 10:19. Note, When an affliction has done its work it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a penitent people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed, in wrath, from an impenitent prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters, by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed when God by it had *accomplished his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem,* ⁽³⁰²⁾Isaiah 10:12. This enemy shall be driven away, because *he has done great things*, has done a great deal of mischief, and has *magnified* to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows (v. 21), *The Lord will do great things for his people*, as the enemy has done great things against them, to convince them that wherein they deal proudly he is, and will be, above them, that, what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as, when he said to them, Go, they went, so, when he said to them, Come, they came, to show that they were *soldiers under him*.

2. The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised (v. 22) that *the pastures of the wilderness*, the pastures which the locusts had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again *spring* and the *trees shall again bear their fruit*, particularly the *fig-tree and the vine*. But, when we see how the country is

wasted, we are tempted to say, *Can these dry bones live? If the Lord should make windows in heaven*, it cannot be; but it shall be, for (v. 23) *the Lord has given* and will give you *the former rain and the latter rain*, and, if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season, *the latter rain in the first month*, when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. *He has given you a teacher of righteousness*, (so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the *rain* signifies a *teacher*. and that which we translate *moderately* is *according to righteousness*), and this *teacher of righteousness*, says one of the rabbins, is the King Messias, and of him many others understand this; for he is a *teacher come from God*, and he shows us the way of *righteousness*. But others understand it of any prophet that *instructs unto righteousness*, and some of Hezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign that God has mercy in store for a people when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

3. All their losses shall be repaired (v. 25): *“I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine.”* Thus does it *repent the Lord concerning his servants*, when they repent, and, to show how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and, like the jailer, *washes their stripes*. Though, in justice, he distrained upon them, and did them no wrong, yet, in compassion, he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal, upon his return, made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called *God's great army which he sent among them*, and he will repair what they had devoured because they were his army.

4. They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the stores where they lay up, and you shall find *the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil* (v. 24), whereas, in the day of their distress, the *wine and oil languished* and *the barns were broken down*, ²⁰⁰ Joel 1:10, 17. Look upon their tables, where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they *eat in plenty and are satisfied*, v. 26. They do not eat to excess, nor are surfeited; we hope the *drunkards* are cured by the late

affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink, for, though they were brought in howling for their scarcity (~~2915~~ Joel 1:5), they are now brought in again here singing for the plenty of it; but now all shall have enough, and shall know when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing and give them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these *God does great things* (v. 21), *He deals wondrously with his people*, v. 26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shows that he can relieve his people though their distress be ever so great, and glorifies his goodness, that he will do it upon their repentance though their provocations were ever so great. Note, When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him it must be acknowledged that he deals wondrously and does great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at gospel-grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he has sent us (according to his promise here, v. 19) *corn, and wine, and oil*, or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith.

III. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them and the good account they shall turn to.

1. God shall have the glory thereof, for they shall *rejoice in the Lord their God* (v. 23), and what is the matter of their rejoicing shall be the matter of their thanksgiving; they shall *praise the name of the Lord their God* (v. 26) and not praise their idols, nor call their corn and wine the *rewards that their lovers had given them*. Note, The plenty of our creature-comforts is a mercy indeed to us when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then *bless the Lord*, with a very sensible pleasure, for *that good land which he has given him*, ~~2980~~ Deuteronomy 8:10.

2. They shall have the credit, and comfort, and spiritual benefit, thereof. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it,

(1.) Their reputation shall be retrieved; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another when they have returned to him in a way of duty and he to them in a way of mercy (v. 19): “*I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen, that triumphed in your calamities and insulted over you;*” and v. 26, 27, “*My people shall never be ashamed, as they have been, of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again and ever have the same occasion to boast of it.*” Note, It redounds much to the honour of God when he does that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they may be for a time, shall not be always, a *reproach among the heathens*; if we be rightly ashamed of our sins against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God.

(2.) Their joys shall be revived (v. 23): *Be glad and rejoice, O land!* and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty are commonly times of joy; yet the favour of God *puts gladness into the heart* more than those who have *corn, and wine, and oil increase*. But especially *be glad them, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God*, v. 23. They *mourned in Zion* (v. 15), and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice; for those that sow in penitential tears shall certainly reap in thankful joys. The children of Zion, who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing. But observe, They shall *rejoice in the Lord their God*, not so much in the good themselves that are given them as in the good hand that gives them and in the return of his favour to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of. The *joy of harvest* and the joy of a feast must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us.

(3.) Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy (as with many it proves) that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here (v. 27): *You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, the Holy One in the midst of thee* (²¹⁹Hosea 11:9), *and that I am the Lord your God, and none else*. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he *wounds* and he *heals*,

he *forms light and darkness, he does good and evil* (^{285V}Isaiah 45:7; ^{452V}Deuteronomy 32:39), so it proves him to be *God of Israel*, a God in covenant with his people and a father to them, that as a father he both corrects them when they offend and comforts them when they repent. It was the burden of the threatenings in Ezekiel's prophecy, *Such and such evils I will bring upon you, and you shall know that I am the Lord*; and the same is here made the crown of the promises: *You shall eat, and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus you shall know that I am the Lord*. Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace, and joy, upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever — that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them, *nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for*, and, as the sun in the centre of the worlds, so in the midst of them as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share therein and be made easy thereby: *Fear not, O land!* v. 21. *Be not afraid, you beasts of the field,* v. 22. They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him; and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to *cry unto God* (^{301V}Joel 1:20); and now that cry is answered, and they are directed not to *be afraid*, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God, in sparing Nineveh, had an eye to the cattle (^{304V}Jonah 4:11), for the cattle had fasted, (^{298V}Joel 3:8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the *creature, that is now made subject to vanity and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty, of the children of God,* ^{452V}Romans 8:21.

^{298V}JOEL 2:28-32

PROMISES OF MERCY

The promises of corn, and wine, and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country; but here we are taught that we must

not rest in those things. God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things, both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory, with the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

I. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful *effusion of the Spirit*, (v. 28, 29). We are not at a loss about the meaning of this promise, nor in doubt what it refers to and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, on the day of Pentecost (⁴⁴¹Acts 2:1, etc.), that was the very thing *which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel*, v. 16, 17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which, according to this prediction, was *to come*, and we are not to *look for any other*, any more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now,

1. The blessing itself here promised is the *pouring out of the Spirit of God*, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were, upon the judges and prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream, as was promised with an eye to gospel-times, (^{244B}Isaiah 44:3. *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.*

2. The time fixed for this is *afterwards*; after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter expounds this of *the last days*, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution.

3. The extent of this blessing, in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed. The Spirit shall be *poured out upon all flesh*, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, (⁵¹¹Romans 10:11, 12. Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy; but, in the last days, *all flesh shall see the glory of God* (²³⁰⁵Isaiah 40:5) and shall come to *worship before him*, (²³⁶³Isaiah 66:23. The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon

Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles (~~404~~ Acts 10:44, 45), which was but a continuation of the same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out *upon all flesh*, that is, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. *Upon all flesh*, that is, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves.

(1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex. Not *your sons* only, but *your daughters*, shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, ~~420~~ Acts 21:9. Not the parents only, but the children, shall be filled with the Spirit, which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church.

(2.) Upon some of each age: “*Your old men*, who are past their vigour and whose spirits begin to decay, *your young men*, who have yet but little acquaintance with and experience of divine things, shall yet *dream dreams* and *see visions*;” God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to the young and old.

(3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition, even *upon the servants and the handmaids*. The Jewish doctors say, *Prophecy does not reside on any* but such as are *wise, valiant, and rich*, not upon the soul of a *poor man*, or a man *in sorrow*. But in Christ Jesus there is *neither bond nor free*, ~~428~~ Galatians 3:28. There were many that *were called being servants* (~~422~~ 1 Corinthians 7:21), but that was no obstruction to their receiving the Holy Ghost.

(4.) The effect of this blessing: *They shall prophesy*; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into nor foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the scriptures were written, and the ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

II. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced (by the universal change of nature, v. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable

to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this, and tremble. There is a *great and terrible day of the Lord* coming, which shall be ushered in with *wonders in heaven and earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness and the moon into blood.* This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) in the day of judgment, at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ (which is called the *judgment of this world*, when the earth quaked and the sun was darkened, and a *great and terrible day* it was), and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the *sun into darkness and the moon into blood*, and the *wars and rumours of wars, and distress of nations*, which our Saviour spoke of as the *beginning of these sorrows*, ⁴²¹⁶ Matthew 24:6, 7. But before the last judgment there will be *wonders indeed in heaven and earth*, the dissolution of both, without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefaces to and presages of the judgment of the world in the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out shall foresee and foretel that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, and expound the *wonders in heaven and earth* that go before it; for, as to his first coming, so to his second, all the prophets did and do bear witness, ⁶¹¹⁷ Revelation 10:7.

III. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, v. 32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations, than the Old. Now observe here,

1. That there is a salvation wrought out. Though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet *in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance* from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile. In the everlasting gospel, which *went from Zion*, in the church of the first-born typified by Mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is *deliverance*; a way of escaping the *wrath to come* is found out and laid open. Christ is himself not only the *Saviour*, but *the salvation*; he is so *to the ends of the earth*. This deliverance, laid up for us in the covenant of grace, is in performance of the promises made to the fathers.

There shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said. See ^{<417>}Luke 1:72. Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that, whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them, if it be not their own fault. And, if we would share in this deliverance, we must ourselves apply to the gospel-Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is *in that remnant* (that is, among them) that the deliverance is, or in their souls and spirits; there are the earnest and evidences of it. *Christ in you, the hope of glory.* They are called a *remnant*, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant but a chosen one, a *remnant according to the election of grace.* And here we are told who they are that shall be delivered in the great day.

(1.) Those that sincerely call upon God: *Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord*, whether Jew or Gentile (for the apostle so expounds it, ^{<513>}Romans 10:13, where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged), *shall be delivered.* This calling on God supposes knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and, as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for, without that, crying *Lord, Lord*, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant. And it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish that they might have been saved on such easy terms.

(2.) Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is sure to the *remnant whom the Lord shall call*, not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen, but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom *the Lord predestinates*, or *prepares*, so the Chaldee. St. Peter borrows this phrase, ^{<423>}Acts 2:39. Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above.